

Missouri Assessment Program

**Communications Arts
Practice Test**

Grade 9

Student's Name _____
(please print first name and last name)

Teacher's Name _____
(please print first name and last name)

School District _____

Building/Room _____

Date _____

Form 39

Do not open test booklet until instructed to do so.

Fish Cheeks
from *The Opposite of Fate*

By Amy Tan

I fell in love with the minister's son the winter I turned fourteen. He was not Chinese, but as white as Mary in the manger. For Christmas I prayed for this blond-haired boy, Robert, and a slim new American nose.

When I found out that my parents had invited the minister's family over for Christmas Eve dinner, I cried. What would Robert think of our shabby Chinese Christmas? What would he think of our noisy Chinese relatives who lacked proper American manners? What terrible disappointment would he feel upon seeing not a roasted turkey and sweet potatoes but Chinese food?

On Christmas Eve, I saw that my mother had outdone herself in creating a strange menu. She was pulling black veins out of the backs of fleshy prawns. The kitchen was littered with appalling mounds of raw food: A slimy rock cod with bulging fish eyes that pleaded not to be thrown into a pan of hot oil. Tofu, which looked like stacked wedges of rubbery white sponges. A bowl soaking dried fungus back to life. A plate of squid, crisscrossed with knife markings so they resembled bicycle tires.

prawns—
large shrimp

And then they arrived—the minister's family and all my relatives in a clamor of doorbells and crumpled Christmas packages. Robert grunted hello, and I pretended he was not worthy of existence.

Dinner threw me deeper into despair. My relatives licked the ends of their chopsticks and reached across the table,

dipping into the dozen or so plates of food. Robert and his family waited patiently for platters to be passed to them. My relatives murmured with pleasure when my mother brought out the whole steamed fish. Robert grimaced. Then my father poked his chopsticks just below the fish eye and plucked out the soft meat. "Amy, your favorite," he said, offering me the tender fish cheek. I wanted to disappear.

At the end of the meal my father leaned back and belched loudly, thanking my mother for her fine

muster—collect or
display

cooking. "It's a polite Chinese custom, to show you are satisfied," he explained to our astonished guests. Robert was looking down at his plate with a reddened face. The minister managed to muster a quiet burp. I was stunned into silence for the rest of the night.

After all the guests had gone, my mother said to me, "You want to be same like American girls on the outside." She handed me an early gift. It was a miniskirt in beige tweed. "But inside, you must always be Chinese. You must be proud you different. You only shame is be ashamed."

And even though I didn't agree with her then, I knew that she understood how much I had suffered during the evening's dinner. It wasn't until years later—long after I had gotten over my crush on Robert—that I was able to appreciate fully her lesson and the true purpose behind our particular menu. For Christmas Eve that year, she had chosen all my favorite foods.

Fish Cheeks

1. What did Tan's mother mean when she said to Amy, "You only shame is be ashamed"? Use two details from the passage to support your answer.

2. The third paragraph of the passage describes the food prepared by Amy's mother for the Christmas Eve dinner. Analyze and evaluate the author's use of figurative language in this paragraph.

Fish Cheeks

3. Explain why Amy Tan named the passage “Fish Cheeks.” Use two details from the passage to support your answer.

4. Amy Tan matured from the beginning of the passage to the end of the passage. Use details from the passage or your own experience to explain how people change as they grow older.

Alternate Constructed-Response Item

Describe two events from the passage that embarrassed the narrator. Explain why the events were embarrassing using details from the passage to support your answer.

Circle the letter of the correct answer for Questions 5 and 6.

5. What does the “beige tweed miniskirt” that Amy Tan’s mother gave her for Christmas symbolize in the passage?
- A. American culture
 - B. Chinese culture
 - C. Amy’s modesty
 - D. Amy’s frustration
6. What occurred during Christmas Eve dinner that caused Amy’s despair?
- A. The minister belched.
 - B. Robert’s family misbehaved.
 - C. Amy’s family observed Chinese customs.
 - D. Amy’s mother did not cook enough food.

- You will now have 45 minutes for your prewriting activities such as brainstorming, listing, outlining, and writing a rough draft. Use the pages in the test booklet labeled “prewriting” to record your ideas and your rough draft.

Pride can be a powerful influence on a person's life. Think about a time when your pride helped you or got in your way. Then write a paper to your teacher describing the event and the lesson you learned from the experience.

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Prewriting

[illegible]

Prewriting

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Prewriting

[illegible]

Prewriting

[illegible]

Final Paper

[illegible]

Final Paper

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Final Paper

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Final Paper

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